

Abstract 298

TITLE: Risk Profiles for HIV Disease Among Black and White Women in Rural/Small Town Alabama and Mississippi

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OBJECTIVES: Alabama and Mississippi have experienced steady increases in the number of women living with HIV/AIDS as the epidemic continues to spread in both urban and rural areas. We sought to determine the risk profiles for HIV acquisition among women in rural areas and small towns.

METHODS: Comprehensive interviews of HIV-infected persons living in non-urban Alabama and Mississippi were conducted at 19 (AL) and 9 (MS) locations statewide.

RESULTS: Among 771 subjects interviewed, 211 (27%) were women. The study participants included 151 women from AL (72%) and 60 (28%) from MS. AL women included 54 (85%) whites, 92 blacks (65%), and 5 women of other race/ethnicity as compared to MS women with 9 (15%) whites, 50 (83%) blacks, and 1 multi-racial woman (1%). During the period that they probably got infected, black women were more likely than white women to be single (57% vs 19%, $p < 0.001$), to drink excessive alcohol (31% vs. 16%, $p = 0.03$), and to use crack cocaine (21% vs 11%, $p = 0.08$). However, black women reported regular condom use more than their white counterparts (22% vs 10%, $p = 0.03$). Injection drug use (IDU) was reported more often among white women than black women (19% vs 7%, $p = 0.01$). Only 43% of women could identify a high risk sexual partner, more whites than blacks (56% vs. 38%, $p = 0.02$). Overall, more white and black women thought that they acquired their HIV infection from their regular partners (44% and 52%, $p = 0.004$, respectively) than from any other source. Other than differences in racial distribution, risk profiles for HIV infection were similar for AL and MS women.

CONCLUSIONS: Risk profiles for HIV acquisition are different for black and white women in rural/small town AL and MS. Black women are more likely to report high risk behaviors such as increased alcohol consumption and crack use. Higher condom use among black women may reflect their perception of being at increased risk for HIV infection. During the putative period of infection, black women were more likely to have used crack and white women were more likely to have abused injection drugs.

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